

*Scientists in the United States say that new research shows that it might one day be possible to help people who suffer from tune deafness, the inability to hear a wrong note which means the joy of music is lost for many. BBC science reporter Matt McGrath has more:*

Is this tune a little **off-key**? (Music) Or is it this one? (Music)

Well a surprisingly large number of people can't tell that the second tune contains a few **bum notes**. Between two and four percent of the population with normal hearing suffer from tune deafness. It's a related condition to tone deafness, **the inability to hold a note**. For a small number of those affected with tune deafness, the condition is so bad they have little idea of what music is, finding it **indistinguishable from** traffic noise!

Now scientists in the United States say they have discovered that people with this condition actually can actually **detect** off-key music in their unconscious mind but are not able to process it into consciousness. Researchers say it is all **down to** the wiring in the brain that we inherit from our parents.

If scientists can work out the **complex neural pathways** that are responsible for transporting the information around our brains then it might one day be possible **to treat the condition**. The scientists stress they see the condition as a means of understanding the conscious and unconscious mind and that finding a cure is **a low priority**. Anyone interested in music who is suffering from tune deafness should, in the short term say the doctors, **take up** a different hobby.

Matt McGrath, BBC science reporter

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>off-key</b>	musically not correct
<b>bum notes</b>	wrong musical notes
<b>the inability to hold a note</b>	not being able to sing a particular note accurately even immediately after hearing it
<b>indistinguishable from</b>	no different than, seems the same as
<b>detect</b>	identify
<b>down to</b>	because of
<b>complex neural pathways</b>	complicated connections in the brain
<b>to treat the condition</b>	to use medicine or other therapy to make the problem better
<b>a low priority</b>	not important
<b>take up</b>	begin, start

**More on this topic :** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1552449.stm>

**Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:**

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/06/080611\\_tune\\_deafness.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/06/080611_tune_deafness.shtml)